

Kalimpong

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The voice of the Darjeeling Hills

Himalayan Times



Darjeeling

a travesty of democracy

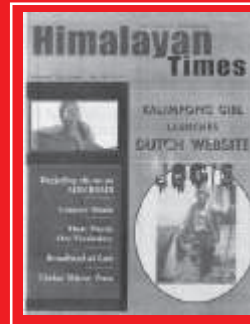
***THE ECONOMIC CASE FOR CREATING SMALL STATES**

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HIMALAYAN TIMES in this issue

Volume 3 issue 13

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writes Vimal Khawas



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EDITORIAL

□ Sandip C. Jain

PROMISES AND THE PROMISED LAND...

The Old Testament tells us of a story in which Moses leads his followers, under extreme difficulties and trying circumstances, out of Egypt to take them to the Promised Land. His followers, the Hebrews, were leading a life of slavery and in pathetic conditions under the Pharaoh of Egypt and Moses, under Gods instructions, led all the Hebrews of Egypt to the Promised Land after crossing the Red Sea, which parted to provide passage to the fleeing party. Moses finally delivered his followers to the Promised Land though he himself could never enter the Promised Land. This extreme act of courage, determination, sacrifice and selflessness for the betterment of his people has earned him immortality in the hearts of the Faithfuls and his name will live on forever.

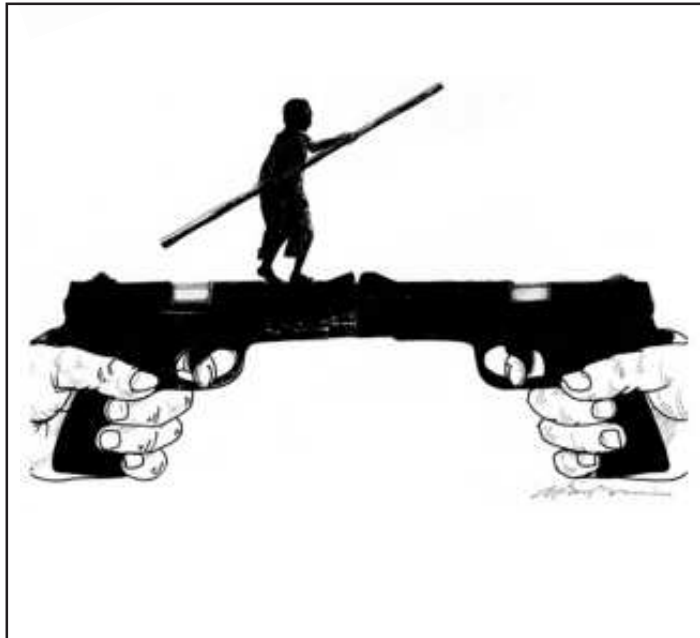
The history of the struggle of the Gorkhas in the Darjeeling Hills can draw a few parallels with this story in the Old Testament in the sense that in its 103 years of struggle, many men of high stature have come promising the poor and innocent people of Darjeeling to take them to their Promised Land, i.e. to lead them towards a Separate State, but it is here that the similarities end. Right from the days of S.W.Ladenla to Damber Singh Gurung to Subhas Gheshing to Bimal Gurung, all have promised the Promised Land but their promise has remained just that- promises. It's a different story that unlike Moses, most of the leaders promising the Promised Land, seemed to have attained their own personal promised lands, considering the wealth and prosperity they acquired while the common man in the Hills is still stuck in the hell hole, like the

Hebrews were in Egypt. The Promised Land promised by our Pre- Independence leaders turned out to be just a District within the state of Bengal, while the Promised Land promised by Subhas Gheshing turned out to be the toothless DGHC and now it appears pretty certain that the Promised Land as promised by the current leadership will turn out to be another glorified DGHC- Ok to be politically correct, it will be another Council but with more powers, more money,

more areas, more departments and maybe with some Constitutional guarantees. The ultimate package may be good enough but by no stretch of imagination will it be the Land which was promised.

But before taking this discussion on the Promised Land any further, let me just take a diversion and dwell for a while on the topic of why we need a separate state of our own.. Do we need it so that we can acquire a National Identity, like several of our leaders are saying??? I don't think this is a logical and well thought of reason. To fight

for National Identity in a country like India is futile- after all India is a country of localized identities. All communities in India have their identity only in the area where they form the majority. Other than in their region of domination, every community in the country is ridiculed, a butt of jokes and made to feel insecure and unsafe. The fact is that no community in India can claim to be the dominant community in India with a National Identity which means every community in India is as insecure or as secure as the other one. Take for example the fact that all North Indians are termed "Bhiyas" south of the Vindhyaachals, All South Indians, whether Tamilians or Telugus or Malayalees or Kanadees, are called 'Madrasis' in the North of the country.



All North Eastern citizens of India are called 'Chinkis' in the rest of the country and are more associated with China than with India. All Kashmiri Muslims are thought to be from Pakistan and Sikhs are looked upon as aliens in all places in India other than in places where they are a majority. Why, even the Bengalis are thought of as being from Bangladesh in parts of India where they are few in numbers... so who has a National Identity??? No one in fact, hence we can safely conclude that searching for a National Identity in India is quite pointless. We in the Darjeeling Hills are as Indian as any other so we need not worry about proving it to anyone, especially those in the Bengal mainland.

So then again, why do we need a separate state for ourselves?? For Development?? The pathetic state of our roads, the sorry plight of our health care system, the water problem, the falling education standards, the lack of higher specialized educational facilities, the overflowing towns, the poor civic amenities, the crippled Public Distribution System and the unequal distribution of Central & State Funds sure do make a good case for the demand of a separate state. But if a separate state is not possible at the moment for any reason and in its place an arrangement can be made which will take care of all our developmental issues, then I personally am all for it. If the proposed Interim Set Up can take care of improving our pitiable infrastructure, I have no hassles accepting this proposal. But my problem is with the proposal not being transparent.. Why should it have been a "gupti report" if there was nothing to hide or if it really was for the betterment of our society? I am a hard core believer of democracy and I believe in the politics of consensus and hence I believe that before the proposal is accepted, it should be fully discussed, debated and passed by all stakeholders in the Hills. After all it is the public that all the Political parties claim to work on behalf of, hence they are the one who have to pass the proposal, not the Political parties. This should not be too much to ask for, after all the GJMM claims to be a party which believes in democratic values and it would do its image a world of good if this baggage of democracy, which they carry along everywhere, is put into practice rather than using it only for its decorative values...

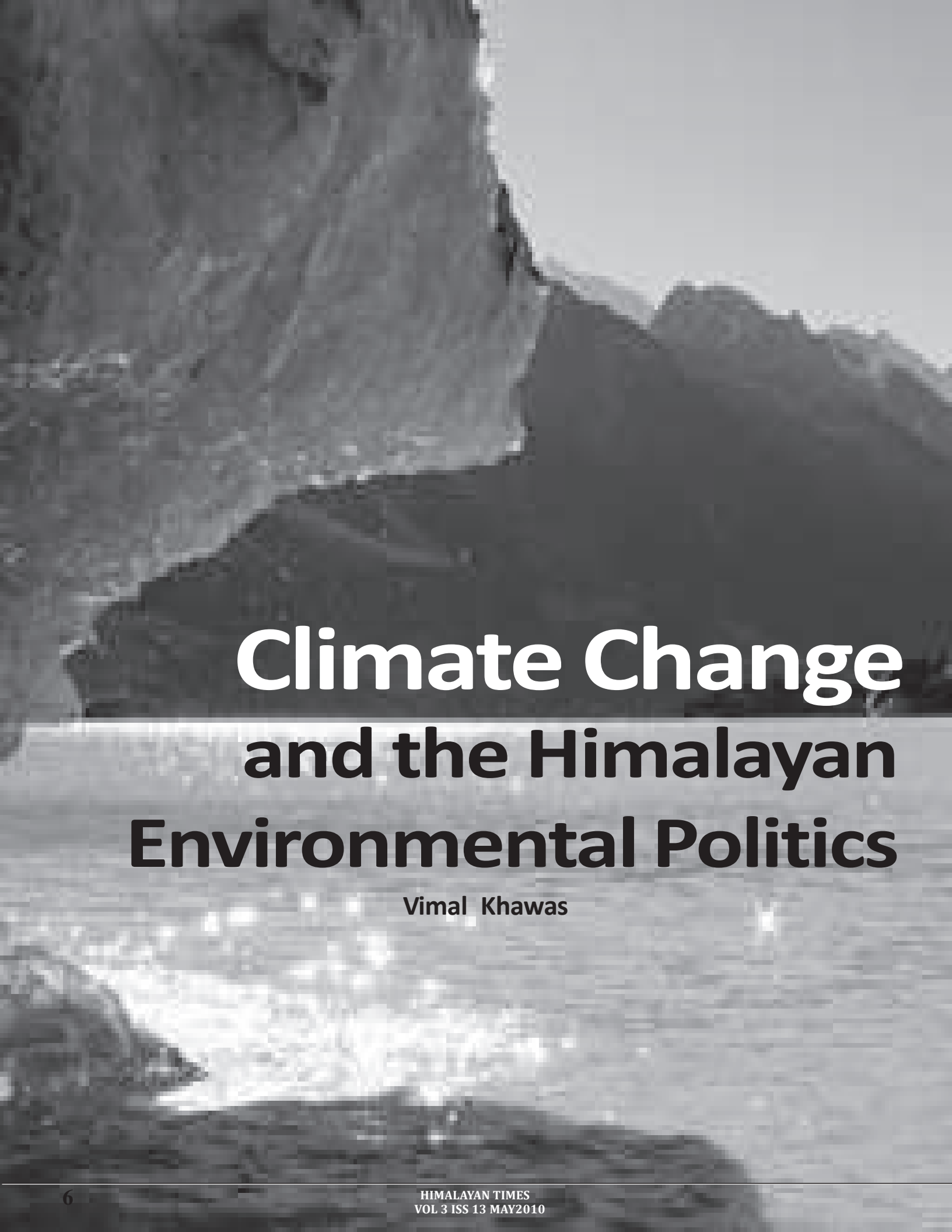
Then again, we cannot assume blindly that development will take place once the Set up is in place.. Just because money is pumped in by the Central and State Governments into the new administrative arrangement will not mean developmental works will pick up speed all by itself. Money was pumped into the DGHC under Subhas Ghosh too and money is being pumped into the Darjeeling Hills at the present too which is being utilized under the watchful eyes and active participation of the GJMM. The question to be asked here is how well was all the money used and whether the money did any good for the Hills or whether most of it ended up lining only a few pockets... Keeping this in mind we need to ponder whether even a separate state would solve any problems if the people running it are either not capable enough or sincere enough. We need honest,

dedicated, sincere, farsighted and capable people to run a separate state; hence the focus must be on developing human skills which would be required for the same. This is where the need for human development comes in....

This for me is the most compelling reason for a separate state of our own... For me the main reason we desperately need the Promised Land is not the material or physical development of the infrastructure in the Hills but rather for the development of its Human Resource. Alas, had our leaders in the previous era given even a little bit of emphasis on the quality of youth that the Hills were producing, we probably would have had entered the Promised Land by now. We need people within the system to fight and manipulate the system. Had we had a few dozen IAS Officers, had we had a couple of Major Generals and Lieutenant Generals in the Indian Army, had we had a couple of Diplomats and had we had at least a couple of State Governors from within the Hill Community, our path towards the Promised land would have been easier and more accessible. But I guess, developing human minds was and is never a priority as money cannot be made developing minds... So why should our leaders have bothered about it???

Coming back to the proposal for an Interim Set up, it seems as though the cat has been set amongst the pigeons... we now suddenly have a very divided house with some wanting an Interim Set up while others clamoring for the 6th Schedule status while yet others not willing to settle for nothing less than complete separation from Bengal. Creating scrambled opinions within the same house so that no solution can be arrived at, is one of the strategies that the State & Central Governments often resort to in trying to temporally defuse any situation they cannot handle and in our case it seems they are succeeding. While they laugh at us for once again leading us into a well concealed trap and while the leaders laugh all their way to the bank, the poor people of Darjeeling find themselves in a predicament akin to that of the Tea leaves between those huge Rolling stones in the Tea factories.

Anyway, let's give them, for the time being, the benefit of doubt and believe when they say that this "Set up" is for the development of the Hills. But like I said earlier, there has to be a consensus amongst all in the Hills with regards to this arrangement or else peace will be the first casualty and like everyone knows, there can be no development without peace... which means we will end up once again in square one after losing 22 years to the DGHC and another 3 years to the present unrest. 25 years is a long long time to have been lost specially for a community like ours which is already light years behind the rest of the developed world. Hope the current leadership understands this and if they do not or choose not to, then I am afraid that the Darjeeling Hills has a very very bleak future. ■



Climate Change and the Himalayan Environmental Politics

Vimal Khawas



The Himalayas has once again hit headlines of the news media in recent days due to the controversy regarding the prophecy of IPCC on the possible disappearance of Himalayan Glaciers by 2035, potentially threatening water supplies of tens of millions of people who rely on the ice to feed the great rivers of Asia, from the Indus and the Ganges in the west to the Brahmaputra and the Yangtze in the east. However, it is now widely argued that the claim of IPCC report rests on two 1999 popular magazine interviews with glaciologist Professor Syed Hasnain, which were then recycled without any further investigation in a 2005 report by the environmental group WWF.

Environmental politics in the context of the Himalayas have long been debated. Assumptions and suppositions with regard to the Himalayan environment and development have been rampant right from the 1970s. We have read ample number of alarmist reports and research works that are often harmful to the health of the Himalayan and downstream populace. With the assumption of the possible disappearance of the Himalayan Glaciers by 2035 by a Scientist of the stature of Professor Hasnain, things have gone from bad to worse. Quoting such an assumption by an international organisation like IPCC has further made the situation murkier. This is not a problem of poverty or malnutrition or education where we sometimes have scope to work on the basis of generalisations, assumptions and suppositions. How can we assume and speculate on such a critical scientific issue like glacier retreat?

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Theory of Himalayan Environmental Degradation was globally propagated. The Himalayan farmers were accused of wanton deforestation and mismanagement of bio-resources in the region, consequently causing serious downstream environmental and socio-economic damage. Huge numbers of projects were mobilised and undertaken in the region by the nongovernmental/professional/academic and government agencies on the strength of environmental degradation in the Himalayas and its potential downstream environmental and human consequences. Since the mid-nineties, climate change and subsequent glacier retreat and glacial lake outbursts have been another popular factor of money mobilisation and it is fast gaining its momentum with time.

However, Geomorphologists like Professor Jack D Ives have time and again cautioned the scientific world not to over-dramatise the environmental situations of the Himalayas and alarm the world. In the context of the Khumbu Glaciers in the Nepal Himalaya Ives once wrote;

“... it has been well documented that the Khumbu glaciers are thinning and retreating and that potentially hazardous glacial lakes are forming. At issue, however, is the degree of hazard, and this appears to have been grossly over-estimated. We must also ask how the occurrence of a natural event (ie jökulhlaup or glacial outburst floods) can be seen as “destroying the environment?” Jökulhlaup are known to have occurred in many glacierized mountain areas and have been documented in the Alps, Alaska, the Canadian Rockies, Karakoram, and Pamir, amongst others. In Iceland, where the actual term jökulhlaup originated, there is a reliable record of destruction of farms and villages extending over several hundred years. Thus, they are not specific to current global warming. So how can a natural process “destroy the environment?”

More significantly, what can anyone, or any institution, do to protect Mount Everest from global warming? The BBC News/South Asia (18 November 2004, online) cautioned that Mount Everest “could one day become



nothing but rock,” implying that all its ice and snow would melt. That would require such a large increase in temperature that the entire population of the subcontinent (at least) would likely have died from heat prostration long before Mount Everest were stripped of its ice and snow. In other words, by the time the mountain had been reduced to a bare rock far more serious extra-Himalayan problems would have diverted attention. Of more immediate concern, however, is that this form of over-dramatic activism runs the risk of substantial misrepresentation. It may also deflect from some of the actual problems facing the Sagarmatha National Park and World Heritage site ...”.

The fact of the matter is, however, that the Himalayas has always been used as an instrument to mobilise financial resource by agencies and individuals both from within and outside the region of South Asia. Right from the 1970s, the geo-environmental vulnerability of the region has served the environmentalists as important basis for them to sensitise and attract the donors located beyond the region. This is amply supported by the fact that one of the richest regions in the World in terms of its bio-resources and traditional knowledge, Himalayas is still inhabited by the poorest in the world. Has the economic condition of the average Himalayan farmer improved in the last forty years? What is the status of human security of the Himalayan population? Where are the discussions and discourses on the human security, livelihood security, environmental security, energy security and such other pertinent aspects in the context of the Himalayas? Where are the policy formulations on these important issues?

There are thousands of Non-Governmental Organisations working in the areas of environment and development of the Himalayas besides governmental agencies for more than three decades. Further, there are now fairly good numbers of research institutions working on the environment and development issues of the region. Where are the results? What have we been doing all these years?

The future of the Himalayas is exceeding bleak unless the region ceases to be the victim of environmental politics. □

Dear Sir,

Your comment 'otherwise honourable Union Minister for Home Affairs' is agreeable. In my view, the 'Telengana *dengay* sort of cry' was only to upset the political rival- the BJP. Our agreeing with each other ends here. Now the contrast begins with due respect to you, Sir.

Telengana is a part of an Indian natural (Vassal) state. Whereas, as per the then Union Home Minister Mr S.B. Chavan, we live in the ceded land. Vide his letter (dt. 11.3.1991) to then C.M. of W.B. Jyoti Basu wherein H.M. wrote "Under the Treaty of Sugauli Nepal had ceded certain territories to East India Company". Can this statement be refuted by anybody? No.

Kalimpong and Doars are considered to be part of Leasehold land of Bhutan. True, Subhas Gheising's plea for ordering the Indian Parliament to act to include the above territories was 'dismissed by Hon'ble S.C.' but with a comment that was a political issue.

Had the Gorkhas supported S.G. in unison our fate would have been different. Telengana people have their Vassal land. The article 3 of the Constitution can be used for Telengana but not for non-territory like this area.

No 'States of Confusion' Sir.

Sooner the 'still born foetus' called DDRA is buried better it will be.

Dr. Mani Kumar Sharma, Siliguri

Dear Sir,

I have been a regular reader and ardent fan of Himalayan Times since its first issue and I must admit that over the years it has managed to sneak into every Kalimpong Lovers 'must read list'. The quality of articles has increased many folds though the quality of printing still is much to be desired. Kalimpong is blessed due to the fact that it has writers like Anmole Prasad, Pravin Moktan, Monila De, Neelkamal Chhetri, late Ian Masson and you, living in it. I wish that Kurseong too had such writers in it. Your article "Gorkhaland & Telengana" made interesting reading and brought out facts that were unknown to the common man. One suggestion I would like to make is that you should release your articles in the net only after they have been released in your magazine or else your magazine will lose its readers.

Sailendra Singh, Kurseong

YOUR SAY...

Dear Editor,

Dr. Wangyel, like always, has written a very informative article in Issue 12 of your magazine.

Dr. R.K. Sprigg deserves all the praises for all that he has done for not just the Lepcha Community but for the Darjeeling Hills a whole. Please accept our congratulations on the article.

Nima Lepcha
Syari, Gangtok

Dear Sir,

Kudos to your editorial "Gorkhaland and Telengana- States of Confusion" in Issue No 12 of your magazine. Your cogent and logical arguments have been really palatable.

Our case of demand is of demerger as you have rightly pointed out. Merger has been so wrongful an act which torments us to think. How long should we cope up with Bengal's misrule?? We have been robbed off so unjustly. The panacea lies with the Centre as our saviour, but it favours the stranger. We are at the weaker side.

The Centre is conniving with our tormentors in perpetuating persecution. Let no politics be played on the humble and legal citizens. We aspire to be unshackled from the age old bondage of Bengal, which has been a nightmare.

Let me join you ardently to shout "*Bengallay Bibhajan keno hobeyna???*"

Dr. Dick B. Dewan Pedong

**A Canadian writer
and her family
came “voluntary”
to Darjeeling. They
discover a spirited
octogenarian priest
who’s created a
future for
thousands of
underprivileged
children**

BY DEBRA CUMMINGS

IT HAS TAKEN me ten months and most of the world to learn what I know about time and love and now little we need in order to feel how little we need in order to feel at home, but the heart of it came to me in an instant, while I was making chapattis on the floor of an orphanage in Darjeeling district. While attempting to roll (read Rip) the dough into a tidy circle, I asked my fellow chapatti flippers, “If a fairy god-mother flew into this kitchen and granted you three wishes, what would they be?”

“My first would be to buy enough feed to save the cows,” said Cecilia George, 45, who came to this orphanage/farm as a teenager and never left. As though stating the obvious, she quickly added, “Second... a washing machine for the orphanage.”

And after a moment’s pause, she says, “I am not knowing if I need a third... No, two is enough.”

Who, in Canada where I come from, wouldn’t take a third wish? Who, with wordily good that amount to just a shelf of saris, blouses, shirt and pants, wouldn’t wish for their own home, a swanky car, a spa holiday in the Maldives- something just for themselves?



FATHER ABE'S
H A V E N T H E H I L L S

The answer to their innocent question, whether you choose something for yourself or for others, can become the story of your life. It's certainly the story of Cecilia George, Sudhir Bhitrikoty, Neeta Roka and father Joseph Abraham—"Abe," founder of St. Alphonse Social and Agricultural Center (SASAC). These are just a handful of the adults who live at and operate SASAC—an orphanage-cum –farm and training center for 45 children-but it's really about serving a community that binds them. This ramshackle "home" is where my husband Scott and Siobhan, daughter, got chilblains, where we all got fleas, where we learned to live with just three hours of electricity a day, where we got up each morning at 4:30 and collapsed into bed with a hot water bottle when the light went out at 9pm.

The four of us-49-year-old Scott, our daughter Siobhan, 14, Quinn, 10 and I- have been backpacking for ten months around the world. In part, this one-year sabbatical was supposed to answer a few questions: Was the careful life I was living what I really wanted? Could volunteering in developing countries nurture a different, more compassionate, world –view in our kids?

THIS HIGGLEDY-PIGGLEDY place in Sepoydura on the outskirts of Darjeeling-where the wealthy British once sent their progeny to boarding school- seeped into me, until I feared if I didn't leave when I did, I might not.

Never underestimate what you can learn while rolling out 200 chapattis at 4:30am with four other girls. Hunched over a tiny wooden board, a mini-rolling pin in

hand, this is where I learned about time. For it takes time to discover why the ten-year-old twins, Pravin and Pravina, are at SASAC: Their drug-addicted father thought twins might fetch some money, so he attempted to sell them mere hours after they were

born. Shanti and her 16-years-old brother, Nigma, came here nine years ago after their mother vanished, forcing their distraught father to bring them to Father Abraham. Fairly new to SASAC are Pooja and brother Sachin, because their mother died a year ago.

Our daughter learns about humility when she decides to get to know each by interviewing them and then displaying their pictures and biographies on a wall. In asking each child what their favorite foods are, no one tells Siobhan pizza

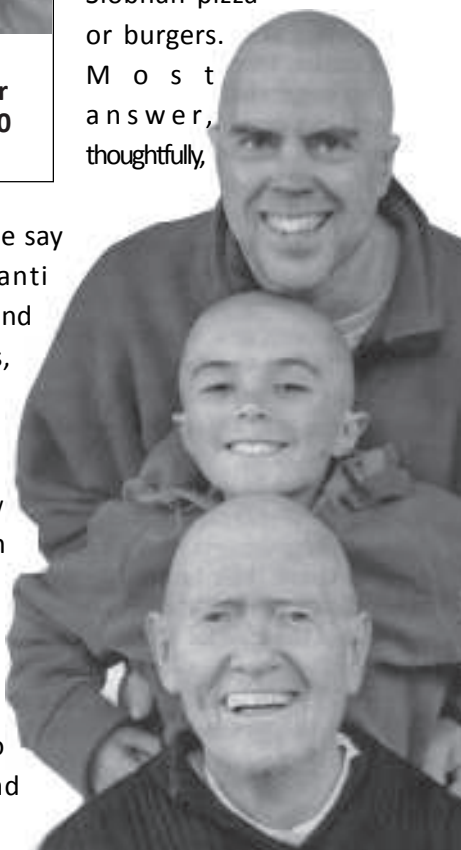
or burgers. Most answer, thoughtfully,

rice and dal. Some say mangoes. Shanti says, "anything," and her brother adds, "something simple."

Other than a few Email between Scott and father Abe-the 82-year-old Jesuit priest from Canada, who first came to India in 1947 and



Top: A young boy with radishes grown at the centre. Below: Scott, Quinn and Father Abraham shaved their heads to raise \$7000 for SASAC



MISSIONARIES IN THE HILLS



Left:
Kids carry to the
vegetable patch
at the Centre.
Right:
Father is famed
for his English
lessons. Here he is
pictured teaching
the children the
basics of the
English language.



whose life's work been the creation of SASAC-we weren't certain what the place comprised. We didn't know that, beyond children living here and taking part in an innovation scholarship/work program, there were ten lay people, 45 cows, one pony, two dozen pigs, 21 goats and hectares of organic vegetables. And that, until Avian Ful hit the world market, SASAC had it a mammoth poultry operation that supplied the Darjeeling region with 20,000 eggs per week.

Father Abe's first project back in the 1950s was to start a school for the poor. Building St. Alphonsus School in Kurseong was a project that took 10 years of daily labour on the parts of students. He was headmaster there for 23 years until 1979 when he built SASAC; again with the help of his students. Other reminders of the priest's good works are a community center and forests of trees-for each year 30,000 trees are planted by staff and visitors. For decades the Father of the Hills," as he is known in this parts, provided work for about 400 people a day but these grate acts of charity were financed mostly by Canadians to whom father Abe sent a monthly news letter for 46 years. Two years ago the funds for innumerable such NGOs in India were frozen as in-visitations into accounting systems began, which sent SASAC, and many others, on a downward spin.

IN THE MIDST of this turmoil is when we arrived only to discover that Father Abe was in a Kolkata hospital, recovering from prostate surgery, but one of his key people, Bhitrikoty, showed us to our two rooms, and we unpacked fully for the first time in seven months. Anxious for their own space, Quinn and Siobhan had been fantasizing about having a closet, drawers and their own beds for weeks. When their room revealed a tiny space with a battered table, narrow a narrow lumpy bunk bed and one shelf, I thought they might weep-but they couldn't. Right behind them was the shadow of eight curious kids eager to watch them unpack. Endlessly fascinated by seashells, camera, laptop, books, batteries, earrings, Frisbee, deodorant...every object from our packet had to be touched, held up to the light and chatted about.

"Namaste, my name is Nameeta" said one little eight-year-old.

"What is your good name?" asked another."Miss, what is your good village? Welcome on SASAC. Missssssssss; thank you too much for coming. Miss, miss what is it you teaching? Miss,I will show you good eating in Neeta's kitchen.

There were smiles in the eyes of these children, joy in their giggles. Painful as their lives appeared to us, each knew there was worse in India, people with far less.

After chapattis were puffed and done, the kids (not ours) would run off, whisting, to milk the cows, clean out barns and get ready for school. During the day, I'd help Scott in the bran as he turned, reshaped and bagged literally tones of gorgeous compost, and then I'd plan an English lesson for the kids' return..Later, tumbling out of the school bus, the kids would run to change their uniforms, then work for an hour weeding, planning and documenting the crops that grew under plastic-sheeted domes girdling the main building, Seeing the thrill that a work –centred,"earn as you learn" education can give children-who put math, science and business into practice was an eye-opener. At SASAC, camaraderie revolves around another precious commodity in India-work-and no one ever questioned its necessity, not if labour would give them an education and a home.

Farm duties done, our family would teach English, lead singsongs, make up plays and help with homework. Then there was a rousing 30-minute prayer session. Dinner, always rice and dal with some chill-infused veggie, was held in a cavernous room where everyone sat on hand woven stools and ate with their hands from their shiny steel plates. More students followed kitchen duties, and then it was off to bed by 8:30pm.



Top: Scene in the refectory & Bottom: The author and here family with some of the children

And so our month flew by, with highlights such as a welcome-home party for Father Abraham, and huge fund-raiser that left father Abe, Quinn and Scott as bald as Buddhist monks. This "hair-razing" event, in which friends and family in Canada all anted up (after an "if-you-pay-so-much-we'll-shave..."camping via emails) to get them to shave their heads, brought SASAC \$7,000-enough to feed, clothe and school the kids for six months.

Before school, after school, Sunday afternoon- there was always a child rapping on our bedroom doors, and it stated to drive Quinn crazy. He got tried of helping kids with their home –work, of singing jingles, of belting out "My Eyes Are Dim,

I Cannot See" on command. Quinn, more then any of us, needs to be alone sometimes. And at SASAC- actually anywhere in India- being alone is almost impossible.

WHEN I remember Borneo, where we went after India, there we were just tourists, growing at the sights, staying, safe, having fun. But when I think of India, I can taste Neet's fiery chill-laced *allo paneer* can smell the cardamom in her milky chai. And I can hear the children's wondrous, musical English.Shanti's parting words stay wedged in my heart:"Miss, Miss, please don't be ready for going. Miss, we are loving you all so. Miss, my heart is paining..."

I can still feel Nameeta's skinny arms warped around my neck, squeezing me to her little heart.

I am still paining..... ■

* Reproduced from the Readers Digest, March 2008

Even as I write this piece, I am under tremendous pressure from my family, friends and well wishers not to do so. .. They fear I may end up like Madan Tamang.... But my conscience does not allow me to keep mum not just because I respected Madan Tamang the man, though not necessarily the politician, but more so because I believe that violence and assassinations should never be a part of a civilized culture which all of in the Hills want to create.

Ten days after the brutal slaying of the ABGL leader I still am having sleepless nights for the fact that despite calling myself a journalist I still hadn't written a single word on the biggest political assassination in the Hills, in all times. Of course some will argue that C.K.Pradhan's murder in the broad day light in the streets of Kalimpong was probably bigger but that is their opinion. Considering the timing, considering the stature of the man and considering the brutality of the act, I think this one act of brutality is the darkest moment in the Political history of Darjeeling.

The motive of this article is not to speculate about who enacted this bloody drama, if I did then the worst fears of my friends and family will come true, sooner than later, but rather this article is aimed at trying to make sense of the all that has been happening around us in the Hills in the last few weeks. I know it's a big ask trying to analyze something as complex and ill logical as the present situation in the Hills but then an effort has to be made even if the effort actually leads nowhere.

First the Madan Tamang killing needs to be put into proper prospective- of course who actually killed him??? Who ordered the killing??? Why was he actually so brutally slain??? Was there a bigger motive behind his killing than which actually met the eye??? I guess no one will ever come to know the right answers to these questions which everyone seems to be asking in the Hills and elsewhere. Well actually, the truth will come out through the investigations that are taking place at the moment and in future but I doubt if this truth will actually ever be made public like the C.K.Pradhan slaying. The CID has already started its investigation, maybe the CBI will probe the affair too but my feeling is that all of it will be just another eye wash... another drain of public money and another "natak". And even if they one day place their finds on the public domain, not many will be too inclined to believe what they have to say. Actually the general public has probably made its own opinion about the protagonists of this gruesome episode and this opinion will stick whatever the CID or CBI will want us to believe. But one thing is clear and is for sure and it's the fact that Madan Tamang was one of the tallest and most dynamic political leaders the Hills of Darjeeling ever had. He had dedicated his public life for the people of Darjeeling and for their welfare. One cannot deny the fact that this man lacked nothing, he had the power, he had the influence, he had the aura and he had the money... in fact a lot of money, which he earned not due to his association with politics but despite it. An owner of Tea- gardens, several hotels and business interests in a lot of other fields, he was a man who did not need politics to make a fortune or earn fame and he was in politics because he genuinely was concerned about the innocent and gullible public of the Hills. His death will leave a vacuum which will be hard to fill up again. Of course he had his defects... but then who does not and they definitely were not so bad that he should have been butchered like a lamb right in the middle of Darjeeling town. His loss has done more harm than good to our quest for separation from Bengal.

The commotion that was sparked off on the day of his funeral is another focus of this article. I have not seen a weirder political occurrence than this in my life. The entire public of Darjeeling seemed to have turned against the GJM. The tearing down of posters, the slashing of all GJM Banners and the full throttle cry against the ghastly killing as well as its against the system that allowed this heinous crime to take place all combined to project a picture which suggested that the days of the GJM were numbered. It seemed that Darjeeling was ready for another political upheaval and the opponents of GJM found themselves rubbing their hands in glee. The massive waves of protests against Bimal Gurung and his party was something unfathomable and it seems that Madan Tamang's death had done what he could not do all his life. With the BIG B camping in Kalimpong, debates took place in every sitting room and tea stall alike on whether this was the end of GJM, Bimal Gurung and the Statehood demand and those in favour seemed to be winning the debate.

Then in the very next day of the funeral, the tide seemed to have turned the opposite direction again... Gurung and his supporters entered Darjeeling in a convoy numbering more than a hundred cars, despite supporters of the opposite camp blocking his path and it was back to normal for GJM. Nothing seemed to have changed for it. On the contrary the rhetoric had become stronger and shriller and forgotten was the fact that the Hills should have been in mourning on the death of one of its most famous sons. It seemed that Bimal Gurung's stars had favoured him again with no political leader of sufficient repute and goodwill being able to capitalize of the outpour of public outrage against him on Darjeeling.

Meanwhile, Gorkhaland is now Gorkha-Adhivasi Pradesh... Is this just another bargaining clip or a significant policy change remains to be seen. How and why are we trying to cajole/drag the Adhivasis into being a part of a proposed Gorkha State is something that baffles me no ends and I am sure it does all the readers of this magazine too. But I guess trying to get an answer to this may be treated as questioning the Almighty and may be injurious to my health so its best not to be too nosy about it.

Till a few months back I thought I could write without fear and without any apprehensions but today after the Madan Tamang killing I am fear writing on political subjects. When someone like him could be slaughtered like the way he was, its best be leave the public make its own judgment rather than trying to offer my opinion. Lets leave it to this for now.....

Darjeeling a travesty of democracy

by Niraj Lama

The shocking daylight slaying of Madan Tamang, the main Opposition leader of Darjeeling, in the heart of Darjeeling town on 21 May, has plunged hill politics to a new low. It has deepened the continuing political crisis in the hills by snuffing out the most recognizable moderate voice in the hills. The current political leadership is suddenly reviled as a murderous lot by the local populace. Worse, this act threatens the legitimacy of the on-going tripartite talks in Delhi regarding the hills' political future.

62-year-old Tamang was overseeing preparations for a public meeting to mark the foundation day of All India Gorkha League (AIGL), a party which he headed, when a mob, believed to be supporters of the Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha (GJMM), attacked the venue with khukris and swords. He was hacked to death in full view of office-goers, local residents and tourists, and, worse, a whole contingent of police expressly deployed to the spot to maintain peace and order during the public meeting.

A wealthy contractor, with a fine taste for art, books and flowers, Tamang was first visible nationally when he single-handedly opposed the Gorkhaland movement led by Subash Ghisingh in the 1980s for its espousal of violence. He was a staunch supporter of Gorkhaland himself but believed in a democratic movement towards its



A wealthy contractor, with a fine taste for art, books and flowers, Tamang was first visible nationally when he single-handedly opposed the Gorkhaland movement led by Subash Ghisingh in the 1980s for its espousal of violence. He was a staunch supporter of Gorkhaland himself but believed in a democratic movement towards its achievement. His refusal to play proxy to Delhi and Kolkata ensured his political marginalization. His uncompromising attitude was also a liability in local electoral politics: AIGL could never make a significant dent in local elections.

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The killing of the veteran leader stunned the hills and sent shock waves through the Gorkha diaspora around the world. It even led some of the senior GJMM leaders to resign from the party. In Kolkata, Tamang's many well-placed friends, including actor Victor Banerjee, expressed their anguish in a long public letter. In contrast, the governments in Kolkata and Delhi stirred ever so slightly, perpetuating the belief that Darjeeling and its residents remain a dispensable lot.

Tamang first became nationally visible during the 1980s when he single-handedly opposed the Gorkhaland movement on account of its espousal of violence. He himself survived several attacks during the agitation. Although a staunch supporter of Gorkhaland, Tamang was not willing to be part of the violence and corruption rife in the hills politics.

On the morning he was cut down, Tamang, a fearless and an outspoken Opposition leader for three decades in the hills, was determined to hold a scheduled public meeting. GJMM had constantly been thwarting his attempts to publicly speak in the hills. The original public meeting venue, for which he had been granted permission by the



authorities, had been forcibly occupied by Morcha supporters.

Unaware of the impending trouble, Tamang and his supporters, ousted from Chowbazar, came uphill to Clubside and began setting up the chairs and mikes for the public meeting. Commercial establishments were beginning to open up and were looking forward to a good day of business with the tourists in town. A recent spell of strikes had hit local businesses hard.

The public did have a sense of expectation regarding Tamang's speech. People were curious about the on-going tripartite talks between GJMM, Kolkata and Delhi. The last round of talks on 11 May had ended abruptly. The GJMM claimed the talks failed because the other parties refused to accede to their demand for inclusion of Siliguri and additional areas in Doars and Terai to the proposed 'interim autonomous authority' for the hills. Although playing hardball in Delhi, back home GJMM was seen to have already compromised on the demand of Gorkhaland. They were now anxious for a face-saver and extremely desperate to snuff out any Opposition on its turf.

Tamang had relentlessly gone after the GJMM, mainly for its 'compromise' on the issue of Gorkhaland and 'corruption,' wherein the development funds were veritably being channeled through the party. This of course was Kolkata's chosen strategy to keep GJMM 'engaged' rather than disaffected.' Denied the chance to hold public meetings by GJMM, Tamang had last year brought out a series of DVDs containing his speeches, wherein he 'exposed' the party

for its nefarious deals and mistakes. The DVDs became popular.

That Tamang's opposition to violence would eventually claim his life was least expected. The public outpouring of grief was widespread in the aftermath. Fear and tension enveloped the hills at the same time. But braving reprisals, Darjeeling residents came out in droves with a candle light rally to honor Tamang and call for peace. The spot where Tamang was felled – a narrow parking lot – became a shrine, where many tearful people came and lit candles.

'This is a dark day for the Gorkhas. Madan Tamang, may not have been politically popular, but he always spoke the truth. In times of political oppression he was the only one who dared to speak out. Now the people have been left voiceless ... This way we will finish ourselves off,' said Mr Ratan Tamang, a school teacher, who participated in the peace rally.

However, the shock and the grief soon gave way to outrage. During Tamang's funeral, which saw a massive and spontaneous turnout of locals, people pulled and tore down GJMM flags and posters. They accused the GJMM of being behind the killing. The mourners raised slogans condemning the party and its leaders.

Cold Politicking

The GJMM on its part denied the party was behind the murder, and blamed almost everybody including Nepal's Maoists. In a preposterous claim, GJMM president Bimal Gurung alleged that the murder was 'a conspiracy hatched by the AIGL and the state government to defame Morcha.' But revealing a slip, Roshan Giri, another top GJMM leader, said his party supporters had been injured in the police firing. He was referring to the shots fired by the personal bodyguard of Tamang.

The GJMM feigned innocence while the state government continued its hands-off approach towards the hills, much to the locals' frustration. It was not enough that the West Bengal Governor, M K Narayan who was actually visiting Darjeeling at the time had termed the killing 'as an attack on democratic forces ... a state of affairs that will not be allowed to continue.' Even Inspector General of Police, North Bengal, K L Tamta, categorically blamed GJMM for the murder of Tamang.

In contrast, home secretary, Samar Ghosh, said in Kolkata after meeting the Chief Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya on the matter: 'Strict

vigil has to be maintained so that clashes or killings do not occur. But we also have to make sure the police do not do anything that can be termed excesses. After all, the situation in the hills is sensitive. We are treating this incident simply as a case of murder. So, only the standard operational procedure will be followed.'

Measure the difference between 'an attack on democratic forces' and 'simply a case of murder'. It is obvious that the government of West Bengal is once again not going to uphold the law when it comes to Darjeeling. Their 'bigger concern' is the tripartite talks. To arrest Morcha leaders including Gurung, who was included in the complaint filed by AIGL to the police, would jeopardize the negotiations.

Even the response from Delhi was far short of what was warranted. Although admitting that normality had to continue in Darjeeling before talks could go forward, senior Congress leader and Union Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee affirmed that the talks with GJMM would continue. 'Our main priority will be to keep the national highways which pass through Darjeeling district open as they are vital to our security... they connect Sikkim and Bhutan,' he said.

The response of both Kolkata and Delhi, as expected, is cold politicking: The stalling of the talks in Delhi will prolong a political crisis that began when Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) leader Subash Ghisingh, was ousted from the hills in March 2008. Ghisingh who had ruled the hills with an iron first for two decades was hounded out of the hills along with many of his party colleagues by a popular movement led by GJMM. During that entire time Tamang was the only and most fierce critic of Ghisingh's draconian rule. Delhi and Kolkata are keen to hammer out an agreement. To their satisfaction, GJMM has acquiesced to continuing regional autonomy, short of a separate state.

Darjeeling too is faced with the reality that aside from GJMM there is hardly any other option. Each opposition party has a small sphere of influence and lacks a mandate despite the growing



unpopularity of GJMM. If GJMM was to implode on its own, there would indeed be a crisis of leadership in the hills.

The total absence of independent governance in the hills is an unacceptable situation. The district administration, including the police, is presently reduced to being a handmaiden of the GJMM. It is exactly the same approach that Kolkata had with Ghisingh, wherein his absolutist regime was appeased, as long as he kept the demand of Gorkhaland at bay. Emboldened by the government's soft approach, GJMM has become a law unto itself.

Even as recent as the past month, two political murders took place in the hills. Both the deceased were local GNLFF leaders – one in Darjeeling sub-division another in Kalimpong. GJMM supporters were suspected to have carried out the killings. As expected there were no notable arrests.

The frustration among local authorities was reflected in the IGP Tamta's statement on the day of Tamang's murder. When asked why armed policemen at the spot did not respond with fire on the attackers, he replied: 'You should direct that question to the state government.'

Six days after the murder of Tamang, Gurung returned home to Darjeeling (he had been away in Kalimpong) with a massive show of strength. In a convoy of nearly 100 vehicles and heavy

police protection, Gurung returned like a triumphant hero. There was no regret or remorse for the death of the veteran leader in that arrogant display. The locals seethed with anger and disgust but were helpless. 'If the police are going to protect instead of arresting leaders who have been named in an FIR for the murder, what can we simple citizens do?' asked a resident, withholding his name in fear of reprisal.

Niraj Lama is a political commentator on hill affairs and former Darjeeling correspondent for the daily The Statesman.

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No you are the liar.. I have the sole right over Gorkhaland.... No you are the liar... I have the sole right over Gorkhaland....



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Numbers are the indispensable element of a democracy. Indeed democracy can be described as number's game. The few cannot decide for the many as it stands for the majority. The will of the majority is accepted as politically ideal, legitimate and morally right. A majority means just over fifty percent. It does not mean plural which denotes plurality. It is not necessarily right and always good for the society. This is the greatest dilemma of a democracy. The history of political theory is profoundly shaped by the discourse on majority dictatorship and the protection of individual liberty. Aristotle went on to argue that it is the worst system of governance.

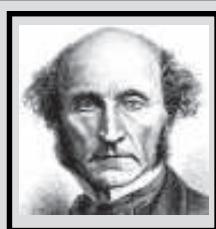
History provides us with enough evidences of the leaders and groups who have concentrated power and authority into their hands on the basis of the strength of the majority. Using it as a weapon to amend the constitutions the majority dictatorship has destroyed individual liberty and equality in a flash of a moment. Political scientists have tried to find out a balance between political obligation and individual liberty.

JS Mill one of the protagonist of individual liberty attempted to divide spheres of individual activities into two to protect him from the tyranny of the majority;

a) Activities of the individual affecting him only and not others;

b) And activities affecting others too. According to Mill the state can interfere only on those activities of an individual that affect others while on the other hand on the activities that do not affect others, he should be left free. But distinguishing individual activities into two such spheres is almost impossible in real life situation. My singing in my bed room is an activity that affects me only and not others. At the same time the others may say that my activity is affecting them because my voice is disturbing on their activities of studying or sleeping. I may think that my drinking at home is an activity that doesn't affect others. My students may say that my drinking at home is affecting them because it is adversely affecting my studies resulting in poor teaching. Thus if I sing in my bedroom the others should not hear it or even if I get drunk at home my students should not suffer in their studies because of my poor teaching.

The discourse on political obligation and individual liberty that began from the time



JS Mill

"state can interfere only on those activities of an individual that affect others while on the other hand on the activities that do not affect others, he should be left free."

of Aristotle is still on. A line needs to be drawn identifying the extent to which the state and its agents can control individual activity and also the extent to which individual obey the authority. If the answer had been easy half the literature on politics would not have come up. As man is a social animal, he has to obey the social obligation.

My PERSPECTIVES My VISION

Dr. Rajendra P. Dhakal

There is no denying the fact that one has to follow law to prevent anarchy but this cannot be a justification for curtailing liberty.

According to Harold J Laski we should have the courage to resist the authority if we feel that certain laws are destroying our "creative impulses" The resistance should come from the consciousness acquired through proper education and social experience. Indeed "the vigilance is the price of liberty". When we are talking about liberty we are basically talking about democracy. Democratic governments are built on the basis of the numerical strength. The source of the tyranny of the majority lies here.

There are various kinds of the majority. The foremost that comes to our mind is the numerical one. Those who have not given their votes to a winning candidate or a party can be considered a minority. That is to say if A has won by getting sixty percent of the votes then the forty percent who have not voted him are here in this case a minority. Secondly, there can be linguistic religious, castes and racial majority and minority. Again a particular group may be a majority in one place but a minority in the other. A Gorkha may be a linguistic majority in Darjeeling but he is a minority in Kolkata. Similarly a Bengali may be a minority in Darjeeling but he is a majority in Kolkata

In India the most talked minorities are religious, linguistic and caste groups. The issues of these minorities are live and central to the polity because of the interest of the political parties that thrive on these issues. If we look at the Constitution the minority issues are already settled as we have a secular polity that gives right to equality and freedom. The problem is exaggerated because the majority dictates the term in our political process. It is worsen by the politics of vote bank.

The reorganisation of the states on linguistics basis provides politico constitutional acceptance to linguistic majority .This kind of political power gives the government with the majority the legitimacy to serve the interest of the majority. The majority dictatorship is manifested even in the developmental activities of the government. For example, the establishments of the medical colleges, universities and institutes of research and higher learning only in those areas where linguistic majority only can benefit most. Comparatively no such developments are found in the minority dominated areas. The tyranny of the majority is also exhibited when the Government makes the language of the majority, for example, "Bengali" essential eligibility in the Public Service Commission's advertisements. The constitutionally formed linguistic states make its possible for linguistic majority to take such decisions.

The identity of the Gorkhas living in and around Darjeeling and Duars has survived because they were

vigil and conscious of their rights. This was due to high rate of literacy and education made possible by the contribution of the Christian missionaries.

Without the political consciousness, the Gorkhas would not have survived against a powerful Government with the backing of strong linguistic majority. The formation of Gorkha sub nationalism due to common lingua franca "Nepali" made it possible for various caste and ethnic groups to assimilate and fight against majority domination. This sub nationalism is the basis of political empowerment of the Gorkhas of Darjeeling and Duars. But this did not happen in case of the Gorkhas living in the North East, Dehradun, Bhaksu and other areas because the populations were scattered.

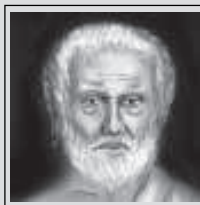
In Darjeeling and in some of the areas of Duars the concentration of the Nepali speaking Gorkhas gives them a clear cut majority which is their source of the political strength. If they loose this strength they loose their struggle for identity. Therefore the assimilation achieved through the process of sub nationalism must be sustained. The Gorkhas must stop now to talk about caste and differences of ethnicity for selfish and trivial short term interests. The political strength cannot be sustained if we divide into caste and groups. The best example of this is Sligari, the town that has seen a "Gorkha" Chairman of the

Gorkhas shown in as a minority of 19 % in 1951 Census and its possible adverse impact on the Report of the Darjeeling Enquiry Committee can never been forgotten.

We need to sustain our numerical strength in our areas of political hold but at the same time must not behave like other dominant majority communities .Being the victim of the majority dictatorship ourselves; we must learn our lesson and be accommodative to the people who are in minority here in these areas. Let us protect ourselves from the bigger majority and protect the minority here from our own arrogance. Let us use our political strength to protect our rights but not suppressing others'. We should inculcate accommodative political culture and create consensus. The politics of consensus is permanent. The majority decisions would always keep space for unrest. Every articles of the Indian Constitution were decided on consensus and not on the majority votes .It has worked well and has survive the onslaught of caste, religion and

language based conflict of Indian politics. Democracy based on consensus has the potential to develop plurality. This can sow the seeds of multicultural society in which social relationship of various social groups is not hierarchical. For this, society needs to develop civic culture. Education facilitates such culture .It develops conscience of accommodation and instils courage to resist authority or groups that tries to destroy our "creative impulses" to use Laski's phrase. Education is the key to successful democracy. Let us educate ourselves. ■

Aristotle



The history of political theory is profoundly shaped by the discourse on majority dictatorship and the protection of individual liberty. Aristotle went on to argue that it is the worst system of governance.

Municipality and a "Gorkha" Member of the Legislative Assembly. As soon as they were out numbered by the others they lost their political hold. At present they do not have even a councillor in Siliguri Corporation. The tragedy of Nepali speaking

*Source: Economic Times

THE ECONOMIC CASE FOR CREATING SMALL STATES

Swaminathan S Anklesaria Aiyar,

Pradesh 90 million . All are much bigger than France or Britain.

At the other end of the scale, Sikkim has just 0.6 million people, Mizoram 1.1 million and Arunachal Pradesh 1.3 million. Clearly , statehood has been determined by political expediency,not,logic.

Is there an economic case for carving smaller states out of large ones? Some analysts say small states won't be economically viable. Others believe small states will fare better, since ordinary people will have better access to power elites. Consider the record of three states carved out of larger ones in 2000 — Jharkhand , Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand.

Ignore data for the first few transitional years. Instead , focus on the average growth rate of gross state domestic product for the last five years, from 2004-05 to 2008-09 .

Amazingly, all three new states have grown fabulously fast. Uttarakhand has averaged 9.31% growth annually, Jharkhand 8.45%, and Chattisgarh 7.35%. All three states belong to what was historically called the BIMARU zone, a slough of despond where humans and economies stagnated. Out of this stagnant pool have now emerged highly dynamic states.

Some caveats are in order. The central government exempted industries in Uttarakhand from excise duty, a concession already applicable to other hill states such as Himachal Pradesh,Kashmir and the northeastern states.

Many big industries rushed to Uttarakhand for the tax break, giving the state's growth an artificial boost . Still,

Should India be broken up into smaller states? After the decision to give statehood to Telangana , many analysts want a newStates Reorganization Commission.

India today has 28 states. Assuming 20% population growth since the last census, Uttar Pradesh has 198 million people, more than Brazil, Russia or Pakistan. Maharashtra has 106 million, West Bengal 96 million and Andhra

Uttarakhand easily outperformed Himachal Pradesh (8.47%) and Kashmir (5.98%). Remember, Uttarakhand was once considered the poorest, most backward part of UP. After statehood, it has become a growth champion.

Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh were the most backward parts of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, which in turn were among the most backward states of India.

Yet, after becoming separate states, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh have emerged as industrial dynamos. Both have large tribal belts with pathetic infrastructure. In Chhattisgarh, four-fifths of habitations lack road access. Both states have ample minerals like coal and iron ore.

But this was not an economic advantage when they were part of larger states. Rather, their mineral revenues were diverted to state capitals. This diversion ended after they became separate states.

Their rapid economic growth has been tainted by massive corruption. Sheer money power enabled an independent, Madhu Koda, to become chief minister of Jharkhand and rule for years. He handed out dozens of mining licences, instead of auctioning them to the highest bidder.

Alas, this problem affects the whole of India: Natural resources from coal to the telecom spectrum are constantly gifted to favoured parties instead of being auctioned, and this enables politicians to amass fortunes. But just as the telecom revolution has been good for India despite corruption, so has private entry into mining and processing.

Jharkhand and Chattisgarh are not growing fast simply through mining. They have experienced a manufacturing boom. Read what research firm Indicus Analytica has to show:

“Since 2001, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh have moved up into the top 10 (industrial states), displacing Rajasthan and Punjab... The phenomenal growth in

these two states has seen the share of manufacturing in their GDP rise dramatically as they have attracted industrial projects.

Looking at the share of income that originates in the manufacturing sector, these two states

have shown higher levels than Maharashtra, Haryana and Tamil Nadu... Being newer and smaller states, they responded more rapidly than their larger — and in some cases better endowed — neighbours... Raipur in Chhattisgarh has now entered the top 10 districts of India in manufacturing, with two industrial estates at Urla

Amazingly, all three new states have grown fabulously fast. Uttarakhand has averaged 9.31% growth annually, Jharkhand 8.45%, and Chattisgarh 7.35%. All three states belong to what was historically called the BIMARU zone, a slough of despond where humans and economies stagnated. Out of this stagnant pool have now emerged highly dynamic states.

and Siltara”.

Now, millions of tribals have been bypassed, especially in remote areas where Maoism flourishes. However, the biggest tribal agitations against giant mining projects are in Orissa. The big Jharkhand projects of Tata and Mittal are in limbo since the state has stalled land acquisition.

The neglect of tribals and consequent rise of Maoism is a blot on the record of Jharkhand and Chattisgarh. The creation of the vigilante Salwa Judum to counter Maoists in Chattisgarh has widely been condemned for violating civil rights.

The two states account for 68% of all Maoist attacks. That's bad for civil rights and security. Yet, achieving fast growth amidst such insurgency is a major economic feat. It highlights the dynamism created when backward regions become separate states. Hopefully, this economic dynamism will help mitigate the backwardness on which Maoism thrives. ■

Nepali-Speaking “Chinese Lepcha” in the Himalayas

— Rev. Alfred Yeo



In the streets of mountainous Kalimpong we visited many Hakka Chinese who were born in India. In 1962, during the China-India border conflict, the Chinese in Kalimpong and Darjeeling turned Lepcha, for fear of being deported. Lepcha is the main ethnic group of Sikkim. Lepcha look very much like Chinese with fair complexions.

The Chinese who adopted Lepcha, speak good Nepali, English, Mandarin and Hakka. There used to be a Chinese school in Kalimpong. One woman said that she had only had primary Chinese education because of financial hardship, but said she is a very successful businesswoman today. In recent decades, there have been fewer and fewer Chinese in Kalimpong. Only about 7,000 Chinese-Lepcha remain. Most of them are shoe-makers. The few Chinese restaurants in Kalimpong are influenced by Tibetan & Lepcha. Beijing dumplings (chiao-tze), known as “mo-mo” in Lepcha, are popular in all restaurants.

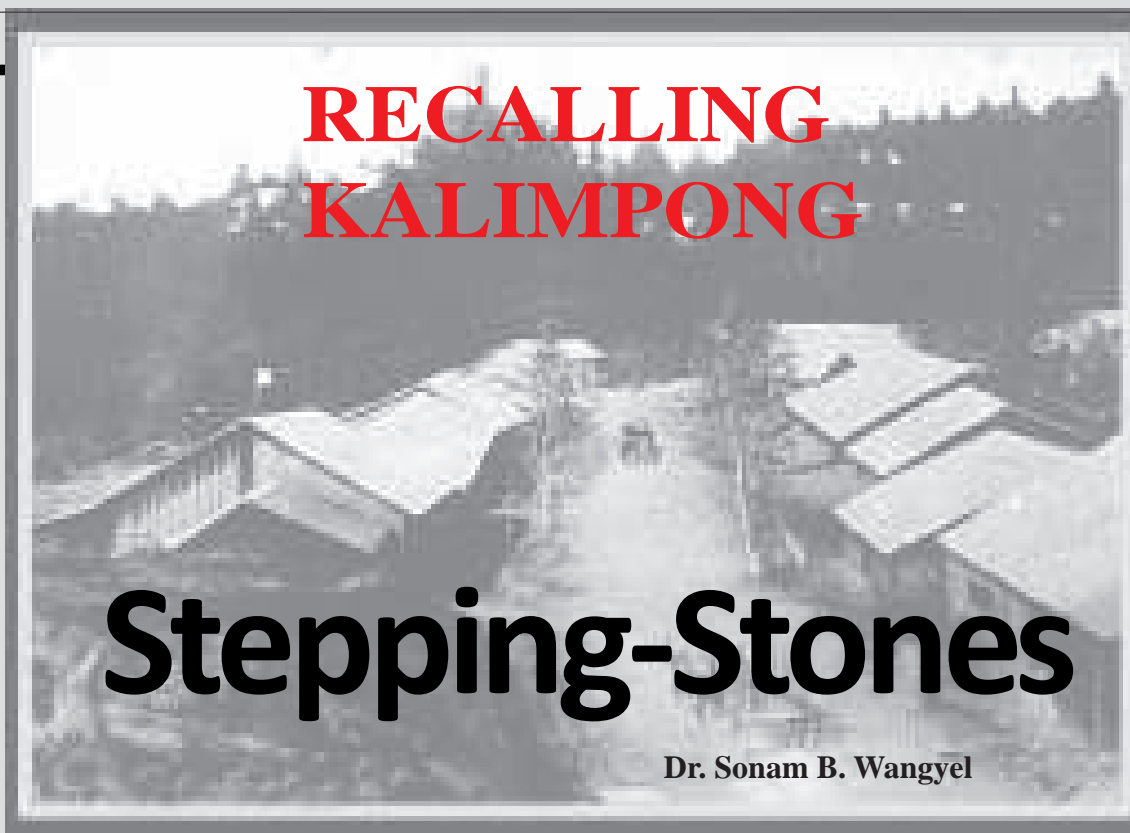
Talking to an elderly Chinese shoe-shop owner who was born in India, I discovered that he is very open and

friendly. His children are in Australia, Taiwan and Canada. He spoke of his loneliness in his tiny shoe-shop. He employs an Indian domestic maid. I noticed a Christian calendar on the wall and learned that he attends a Catholic Church. He orders a Chinese newspaper from Calcutta and his son in Taiwan sends him Chinese newspapers. Another Chinese, a woman who was born in India, speaks very good Mandarin and Nepali. She manages the shoe-shop which she took over from her elder brother who emigrated to Canada. She has relatives in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Australia. In another shoe-shop, the Chinese proprietor was also born in India. He married a Lepcha, who graduated from a University in Taiwan. The woman owner of yet another shoe-shop speaks Hakka and Nepali. She also sells home-made Chinese pork sausage and seems to be doing very well.

No doubt, the next generation of Chinese will not even be able to speak Chinese, because there is no more Chinese school in Kalimpong. Currently, all the Chinese-Lepcha children attend English schools and speak fluent Nepali. There are excellent traditional British schools in Kalimpong. Many wealthy Indians send their children to the schools here or Darjeeling.

In a popular Darjeeling market place, I found Chinese proprietors of small shoe-shops. Normally, it is a husband and wife team without any shop assistants. Sometimes there may be an Indian assistant. These Chinese shoe-shop owners work long hours everyday and have no time for church. Another Chinese lady, born in India, runs a shoe-shop and a photo-copying service. She introduced her elderly parents-in-law to us. They looked healthy and were delighted to speak Mandarin with us. There are only about eight Chinese families in Darjeeling - two of which are Chinese restaurant proprietors. In one Chinese restaurant, I spoke to the daughter of the proprietor. She is an English teacher in Darjeeling School but admitted that she could not speak Chinese. Why do the Chinese make shoe-shops their business? The reason is that Nepalis, being Hindus, feel that it is too degrading to handle shoes and slippers. They also consider cattle to be holy and refuse to handle leather. Some Chinese in Kalimpong make furniture, which Nepalis also avoid. The Chinese in Calcutta are doing a roaring trade in leather, for there are more than 200 leather factories employing Muslims, who do not mind handling cow products. Of course, the Hindus wear leather shoes.

Excerpted from Chinese Around The World, a ministry of CCCOWE. May, 1996



Recently, while shuffling through my modest collection of old journals, I was delightfully surprised by a discovery amongst the rubble of torn, scribbled-over and missing-pages magazines, a copy of the “Stepping-Stones.” It was published by the Young Men’s Buddhist Association (India), which had its main branch at Kalimpong. My copy was a shade younger than I for the cover carried the legend, “Vol. 2, January, 1952 – B.E 2495.” (B.E. stands for Buddhist Era) This Buddhist journal had commenced in July 1950 and my copy was unfortunately one before the last. The famous English Buddhist monk, Sangharakshita, who spent some eventful years at Kalimpong in the fifties, was the main editor with Kalimpong’s own Bhaichand Pradhan chipping as the editor for the Nepali section. Maybe sometime later I will write something on Sangharakshita but for the present you will have to remain contented with the information that he wrote 36 books including one on Kalimpong titled “Facing Mount Kanchenjunga.” Stepping-Stones was a religious magazine and the pious articles will probably not hold the interest of you readers but the advertisements certainly should. The first issue of Stepping-Stones contained several advertisements. There were two that announced the forthcoming releases of books. The first one was “Smile Awhile” by Col. John Warren Swale Ryan and the second one, “The Introduction of Buddhism into Tibet”, by Dr. George Roerich. Both the men forgot to pay up for the advertisements and ironically both the books never saw the light of the day. There were two other full-page advertisements of which the inside back cover was for Jyoti Brothers and the outside back cover adorned the name of Balkishandas Shyamrattan. Coincidentally, my copy, twenty issues later, also had both the advertisers and Jyoti Brothers still retained a full-page, albeit as an inside back cover, while Balkishandas was in the more prestigious outside back cover, but unfortunately, reduced to half a page. From the advertisement it appears that Jyoti Brothers (Nepali Building, Phone No. 79) was the first Kalimpong concern to go multi-national with offices in Calcutta, Bombay, Lhasa and Kathmandu. Opposite Jyoti Brothers’ page were two half-page advertisements: one in Nepali announcing the imminent release of a book on Bhanubhakta by Bhaichand Pradhan and the other in English for your very own “Himalayan Times”. It proudly claimed that the journal was, “The only English Weekly serving Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim, The Darjeeling Hills, Tea-Gardens & Dooars.” For this exclusive weekly one had to fork out Rs. 6/= for an annual subscription and two annas, or just less than thirteen paise, for a single copy.

Despite Kalimpong having a very good press in the form of Mani Printing Press the magazine was printed at Darjeeling in a press with the same name. This anomaly was brought about by Darjeeling agreeing to reduce the cost of printing and I was baffled as to why Kalimpong did not match the price, after all Stepping-Stone was a Kalimpong journal, the cost of sending the text to Darjeeling, visiting the press for editing and the additional cost of transporting the finished journals to Kalimpong could have all gone in favour of the Kalimpong press. I think I have the answer now but since both the presses belonged to the same family, one brother owning the Darjeeling one and two brothers the Kalimpong one, I will keep my silence. I certainly would not want someone to interfere with my family matters and if I am to uphold that then I have no right to meddle in their private affairs also.

